

# Hey Kaffir!

Dr. Nthato Motlana†

It is now 1986, and the government is talking of reform to phase out some of the apartheid laws. At this stage, we only know of some being phased out, and there is no assurance of blanket repeal of all the 800 or so different enactments affecting the lives of Blacks. Yet, despite the talk of reform in South Africa which is being expounded in the press and the governmentally controlled television and radio broadcasting stations, we still hear the calls of: “Hey Kaffir.”

Just the other day at a gasoline station when waiting for the automobile to be filled, a White man gets impatient with the Black gasoline attendant and says: “Hey Kaffir: hurry up.”

This is the same as saying: “Hey Nigger” in the United States.

Small wonder that the Leader of the Opposition Party in South Africa, Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert, has just resigned not only from his post as Leader of the Party, but also from being a member of the House of Representatives.<sup>1</sup>

Sadly, the majority of the White electorate is still of the view that the Black man is merely a utility object—one which is there for doing things for the White man. Thus the Black man is regarded merely as being an object which performs certain labour. The White man is not prepared to accept the fact that there are Blacks who crave education, others who are well educated, and yet still others who are qualified professionals, such as professors, lawyers, doctors. These blacks can easily hold their own in their respective professional fields, yet they are not given any recognition because more often than not they may not exercise their lawful professions in an open market.

One should also remember that in the late 1950's and early 1960's, Dr. H.F. Verwoerd (who later became Prime Minister) was the Minister in charge of Bantu Affairs, and as such, he took over the portfolio of Black education (Bantu education). He often made statements to the effect that he would give Blacks the type of education that would fit their station, namely, to be the “hewers of wood and drawers of water.” This

† Chairman, Get Ahead Foundation, a non-profit company. Following the 1976 Soweto uprising, Dr. Motlana served as Chairman of the Soweto Committee of Ten. Dr. Motlana is also a practicing physician and a prominent community leader in Soweto.

1. Wash. Post, Feb. 8, 1986, at A12, col. 4.

## Motlana: Hey Kaffir!

emphasises the total attitude that was prevalent in the 1950's and the 1960's. This attitude was translated into monetary terms by giving far less to Black education than to White. The figures are appalling in that for every 1200 Rand spent on the per capita education of White children, only one-tenth (i.e., 120 Rand) was spent on the equivalent education of a Black child. There are countless Black schools that do not have any electricity, and therefore have no audiovisuals, computers, or overhead projectors, etc., or which do not even have running water. Most Black schools will not even have playing fields or sports fields which could be anything like those of their White counterparts. Thus, when in the USA one hears of track meets or swim meets, on an inter-college or inter-school basis, this is totally unheard of in our Black situation—even today. At present, it should be noted that the ratio of expenditure on educating Black and White children is something on the order of 1 to 5. The ratio has improved, but it is still far from the desired situation.

The reader of this response should not draw the conclusion that it is merely the majority of the ruling party who adopt this approach towards Blacks. Whilst there is a small minority of Whites doing a considerable amount for the Black people, I should draw attention to the fact that we still have segregated buses (merely as an illustration). It was over thirty years ago, in 1955, when Rosa Parks refused to give her seat on a bus to a White man in Montgomery, Alabama, which led to the racial unrest in the USA, and the ultimate peace initiatives. We have yet to cross all that, and it is what lies ahead of us. The following illustrations therefore will show some of the attitudes that are prevalent today:

(a) The Archbishop of Cape Town (Anglican Church) appointed a Black priest to be his representative in Johannesburg, which meant that the priest should live in the church house. However, this house was in a White neighbourhood, and permission was refused by the government for the priest to live there. After petitioning the authorities, a survey was conducted in the neighbourhood, and the Whites (Anglican/Jewish) objected to the priest living there. This gave the authorities the ammunition to continue refusing to let him live in his allocated house.

(b) I also do not believe that the majority of the hearts and attitudes of the business world—and by this I mean big business—would be found in the correct place. I will be touching on this below in greater detail.

(c) Let us look at government departments—and here one refers to the officials—or the administration of all forms of government policy. One hears very interesting and commendable appeals being made at cabinet and ministerial level about the changes which have happened or are about to happen. Some of these proposed changes may be laudable. But

at the grassroot administrative level, things are still being fudged by the administrators or officials in Pretoria. A clear example was the announcement in 1978 by the government of the right of Blacks to obtain ninety-nine-year leasehold registration over their properties in the townships. It should be noted here that we were not entitled to freehold ownership, which applies to other races in the country. We could only obtain the leasehold system rights in the townships, and not on a national scale. This ninety-nine-year leasehold system may have worked on a limited scale in Soweto (my home township), where apparently some fifteen percent of the residents opted for obtaining leasehold registration. Outside of Soweto, however, the track record is dismal. One has seen fewer than ten registrations in other townships, with none being recorded in quite a few. The difficulty relates to the question of paperwork. A very simple illustration is a comparison between, on the one hand, the more complicated type of transfer relating to the sectional title of freehold property owned by a White, and on the other hand, the ninety-nine-year leasehold transfer applicable to a Black. For a White, some six forms are required, while for a Black there are fourteen required forms. More particularly, these fourteen forms often require a signature or permission from a White bureaucrat.

This introduction and background is given to show that one of the major problems facing our country is that of attitudes, not only of individuals, but of large business as well as government departments. Accordingly, any post-apartheid government will need to correct a considerable amount of damage done by apartheid, particularly with respect to correcting attitudes and peacefully bringing about attitudinal changes.

### New Policies and Institutions

In considering what policies could be pursued by a post-apartheid government, and also what kinds of institutions could be created, one should bear in mind the present aspirations and desires of the Blacks. For the purposes of this discussion I shall exclude our present political aspirations, which relate to the total demolition and removal of the wicked apartheid rules, practices, and statutory enactments. Instead, I shall follow the assumption of the editors of this Journal and adopt the stance that a new post-apartheid government will have dismantled the 800 or so Parliamentary Acts and Regulations which govern the lives of myself and of my Black counterparts at present. I shall assume further that there will be true political freedom, as well as freedom of association, choice of residence, and choice of work place, coupled with the ability to

Motlana: Hey Kaffir!

sell one's skills on a free open market. These freedoms may require some form of entrenchment in a constitution.

I shall thus direct my discussion towards attitudinal approaches, and concentrate on the difficulties they pose. However, I shall relate them to the present aspirations of my fellow Blacks and see whether these aspirations might be met.

At present, the Black desires or aspirations may be summarised in the following order:

- (a) Employment opportunities, including security of tenure in a job situation. To this will also be added the question of self-employment, management at the executive level, and the like;
- (b) Education, and here one refers to formal education; and
- (c) Housing.

## Employment

I believe that there will be other participants in this Colloquy dealing with the attitudes of Trade Unions and Trade Unionists. They will be better qualified to speak on the Trade Union situation as it is now and as they would hope it will be in a post-apartheid situation. I shall therefore consider the question of Blacks who fall outside the Unions in the present employment situation.

Due to the recession which has faced our country, and which may well continue because of increased economic and diplomatic pressure being brought to bear in the effort to dismantle the apartheid regime, the question of job creation or employment opportunities is one of the uppermost aspirations of our Black people at the present. Our Blacks are really suffering now, mainly because of the lack of education and skills. It should be recorded that in the homelands people are starving because they do not have jobs. Many have been returned from employment opportunities in the industrial areas due to big businesses being forced to close down because of the economic recession. We hear that people live in simple mud huts, without any income, and cannot even afford twenty dollars to pay for the school books required for a first semester at a rural school (offering an inferior education).

Again, as I write this article in Soweto now, one should see the queues of people who line up at the pass offices eager to take on any form of employment. There is a recently launched programme for creating jobs for unemployed people, and one needs to see the poor people lined up at 6 A.M. on the outskirts of Soweto waiting for large trucks to come and fetch them and take them to their work sites.

Reverting to the attitudes of people, I am satisfied at this stage that one of the first attitudes that needs to be corrected under a post-apartheid government would be that of big business. Perhaps one should look at some of the following actions of some of the big business world over the last few years to appreciate this statement:

(a) It was big business that met with the Prime Minister at the Carlton Conference for Businessmen in 1979. They felt very cozy with the government, and felt that all was well. No Blacks were invited to that conference.

(b) The same businessmen again met with the Prime Minister and members of his Cabinet at the Cape of Good Hope Conference—and a few Blacks were invited as an afterthought. Once again big business felt all was well, and was quite satisfied with the government.

(c) It was big business, in general, which advocated an affirmative vote in the referendum that created the new tricameral parliamentary system, which opened the doors to Coloured and Asians, but which specifically excluded Blacks. This has been a very sore point amongst Blacks, as the business world should become alerted to.

(d) With the recent introduction of the state of emergency, many of our Black people have been killed, detained, or raped. One hears tragic stories of seven-year-old children being detained by the police. It should be recorded that under the emergency regulations, the police have been granted immunity of prosecution for deeds purportedly executed in the course of their duties. And yet it was organised commerce and industry which welcomed the introduction of the state of emergency.

It is only now, when South Africa is facing an economic crisis due to a plummeting Rand, when there is the introduction of exchange control, when there is inability to repay international loans on time, and when there is a considerable loss of profits in many large companies, that business is starting to talk to Blacks in a meaningful sense. Indeed, we have the hilarious case of some business men charging off to Lusaka to talk to the ANC, when in fact they should have been talking to the Black leaders in South Africa for years gone by.

The current situation in South Africa is that a number of business leaders are now venturing into the field of making political statements, and many of them are fairly outspoken. Their suggestions are good. However the Black people are looking more for deeds and actions as opposed to mere words. Simple illustrations of what I mean are the following:

(a) Whilst the chief executive of a company may well be pleading for change, and may exhort his company's workers to believe in his pleas,

the actions of staff lower down in the company certainly would not be consistent with the words of the chief executive. One notices that there may be an absence of equal opportunities and so on.

(b) Large businesses somehow have the knack of always keeping a Black person in the position of being an “assistant manager” or “assistant sales person,” despite many years of training and experience. A White person, having no experience, often comes in over the head of the Black person and is made the “manager” (to whom the Black person is the “assistant”). There are many examples of this in commerce today.

(c) Again, whilst the chief executive of a company may wish to bring about change in South Africa, he has not really applied his mind to the consequences of what this may mean. Thus, he has not yet purchased a single item from a Black industrialist or Black supplier. His lower management certainly would never dream of doing so, despite the fact that the objective of such an order would be to tutor or mentor the Black supplier into ensuring that the goods or services are delivered at the right time, at the right price, and at the right quality. If one really wants Black entrepreneurs to succeed, then one should purchase the products of Black entrepreneurs and thereby open up the market to them.

(d) Then there is the question of migrant labour, used mainly in the mines (for example). Although this is not quite my field, one hears of much being said by mining magnates. Yet we do not know what they have done to make the life of a migrant labourer more pleasant as far as perpetual employment is concerned. Living with one's family, or the introduction of pension funds would be a start—for example, there are *no* pension funds for the thousands of migrant labourers.

All these items show once again that there is a vast amount that has to be done in connection with the changing of attitudes, and here one is talking not only of governmental attitudes, but also that of business, right across the board.

To overcome these difficulties the policies that I feel should be pursued would include:

a) The active encouragement of the informal sector. It is tragic that South Africa lags so far behind the rest of Africa and more particularly South America, the Far East, and so on. We have let a golden opportunity slip by: the authorities until very recently clamped down on informal sector operations and are only starting to lift the lid. We must inject considerable sums of money and effort into this sector.

(b) The establishment of informal market places that would enable the crafts people to make and sell their wares. As one travels around Africa, one sees in Senegal, for example, a man rolling gold over an open

fire: he makes earrings and sells them on the spot. None of this happens in our country at present.

(c) The massive employment of people, and a determined effort by both public and private sectors to create jobs and employment. One need not have to employ people who would merely sweep streets. They could be gainfully employed in building classrooms (and so many are required), churches and church halls, informal markets—a host of things that we so urgently require.

(d) The active training by business of Blacks, particularly with a view to enabling them to take up senior managerial and executive positions. This would also relate to training people so that they can sell their skills on the open market, thereby generating a freedom of movement in the economic sphere. Thus, a worker will need to feel that he can sell his services easily and freely, which will also improve his living standards. Despite the millions of Rand earned by big business in South Africa, one has not noticed much progress in this field. Big business is quite happy to talk, but it does very little when it comes to actually making jobs available for Blacks at a senior or executive level.

(e) The introduction of legislation to protect employees (outside of the Trade Union situation) who are currently being exploited, and in this regard I record that there is a vast number of employees who do not enjoy any security of job tenure; neither do they enjoy any written contract with their employer. Furthermore, there is an absence of provision for benefits such as pensions, medical aid and so on.

(f) There should also be a stringent and accurate implementation of a system of rules aimed to protect an employee against wrongful or unlawful dismissal.

(g) Business must be encouraged to devote far more expenditure towards education and training (and one would merely hope that some day business will be persuaded to spend as much money on education as they do on sport sponsorship, for example).

(h) Monopolies cannot be tolerated; they tend to exploit the poor so much more. Steps will have to be taken to reduce the effectiveness of monopolies, cartels, and situations where there has been a total exploitation of the Black people to date. This must lead to an increasing sharing of opportunities and wealth.

## Education

As has been previously stated in this response, the situation currently prevailing in South Africa is totally untenable. Over and above the attitudes which have prevailed in relation to Black education, it should be

Motlana: Hey Kaffir!

recorded that there are separate facilities for educating Whites [who have four separate provincial departments for their education], Blacks, Asians, and persons of mixed race.

The nearly forty years of Nationalist Party government have been successful in ensuring that most Black teachers in the Black schools are very underqualified. Some surveys have shown that ninety percent of Black teachers do not have the required qualifications for the jobs that they hold. Whilst a number of teachers may have a matric (or school leaving) certificate, there are a greater number which do not.

Again, it would be totally incorrect for Whites to believe that they could continue having the benefits of an educational system which has been totally biased in their favor thus far. They have been taught the skills of science, management, and economics. There will have to be an equalisation of education and training programmes. One such possibility would be to take well-trained people out of their existing environs and to make them supervisors/principals of schools having underqualified staff. For adequate reward, these supervisors/principals could ensure that the fellow members of their staff are upgraded as far as academic training and technique are concerned.

Indeed it should become compulsory for all newly qualified teachers to spend at least a year teaching in Black areas, i.e., as part of their bursary or loan repayment. This principle could be extended to other fields, e.g., medicine. Perhaps the most important benefit of this approach would be that it would enable South Africans to meet each other at a young age. The present position of no mixing amongst Afrikaans and English-speaking pupils (who are white), or White and Black pupils, or Asian and Coloured children, is totally untenable. If people are to accept one another and live in peace, it is vital that they share experiences and form friendships early in life, before attitudes become fixed. State schools must be open to all and there must be equal opportunity of admission.

Furthermore, we should embark on the most active campaign to train our people (particularly our Black people) in technical and scientific skills. At the present moment our Black people receive an education which historically evolved into concentrating on liberal arts subjects such as history, biblical studies, and the languages. There is a tremendous paucity of teachers trained in the sciences and mathematics. When one realises that this may have been part of a government programme to deliberately down-grade the education of Blacks, as has been previously stated, and one realises that we Blacks have merely been educated for a particular station in life (to be a labourer/worker), it makes our people



very angry to know that the present systems continue virtually unchanged despite the riots of 1976 and recent months.

What angers our people even more is to see big business raping the country by taking out the raw materials and simply shipping these out of the country, for the quick profit. We find it staggering that raw wool from this country is processed overseas, only to be repurchased by our country when it is finally produced in woollen balls or a finished article. Similarly, so many of our raw minerals leave our shores only to be refined and returned to us in a finished article state. We must aggressively educate our people in the fields of science and technology.

With the vast raw materials at our disposal, we could be generating a tremendous and thriving economy based on the cottage industry concept alone. This thriving economy could be translated into a wider sphere once the necessary skills have been developed. We would need to improve on the low productivity levels of our population. This could be done by incentive schemes, such as those in Japan, where workers own a part of their company and thus benefit from the company's success.

It is naturally reconfirmed that the educational system for our young people would be such that schools would be open to all races, and that there will be equal opportunity in such schools. As one example, let us look at what happened in Zambia and Zimbabwe. It is my understanding that once the schools were opened to all races, there was a definite decline in the academic standards which had hitherto been enjoyed by the Whites. However, the gain to the vast majority of the population was substantial in that the overall standard of education was increased for the whole population. Instead of turning out a few hundred graduates, the position in Zimbabwe had changed over a period of some five years, and thousands are now leaving school each year duly certified.

At the tertiary level, we need to abolish the present Black universities and make all universities have equal standing. There will be a need to build many more institutions to promote technical skills and knowhow. There is going to be a crying need for people with technical skills. This would require urgent attention.

Another most serious task would be to provide education and opportunity for the children who left the townships to participate in the struggle to overcome apartheid. This will need our urgent attention.

## Housing

The present situation is that despite the influx control laws, there is a considerable flow of people to the cities. This is because of their desire to obtain employment when the opportunities no longer present themselves

## Motlana: Hey Kaffir!

in the rural areas. The trend is not unlike that which has happened in Europe and the United States.

It should also be recorded that the flow of people to the cities has also been a result of the fact that our Black people have been forced off the land. Our Black workers have been forced into a proletariat situation. This is because of the fact that they have never been able to enjoy any freehold title whatsoever to land. Thus they enjoy no security. Again, there used to be the Poll Tax, or "hut tax," levied against Black people.<sup>2</sup> These factors aggravated the situation and forced the people to the cities.

However, because of the draconian influx control laws that prohibit Blacks from being able to freely come to a city and seek out employment and accomodation, there has been a limit placed on the number of houses built in Black townships. In a number of cases, development of the townships was frozen for many years. Thus some of the townships outside Pretoria, for example, were "frozen" by the government from 1957 until just two years ago, i.e., for a period of twenty-five years. This is true of most townships throughout the country.

Thus, one has noticed the considerable overcrowding in the townships in these small tiny houses. It has been reported that the normal two-bedroom house has an average of ten persons; and the reader should be aware of how people sleep on the floors, in the lounges, in fixed positions each night arranging themselves like sardines after moving away items of furniture. This considerable overcrowding has led to the townships being called "ghettos" by the Black populace.

Apart from the mere restriction on availability of housing, there are also the very stringent building regulations and laws. These do not easily make provision for the type of housing required by a person recently arrived in a city and looking for employment. Again, we do not have apartment blocks in the "ghettos." Rather we have been confined to the small two-bedroom houses, which we refer to as the "matchbox" houses.

There is no doubt that to ease the plight of the many people who are suffering, and who have suffered, we will have to embark on a massive housing operation. It is of course assumed that the laws such as the Group Areas Act<sup>3</sup> and the Land Trust Act,<sup>4</sup> which specifically prohibit Blacks from owning land in the cities (or even in rural areas), will have been repealed. Once this has been achieved, Blacks who can afford to do

2. Black Taxation and Development Act, No. 41 of 1925 (since amended fifteen times from 1926-63).

3. Amendment of Black Land Act of 1913, No. 41 of 1950.

4. Development Trust and Land Act, No. 18 of 1936 (since amended thirty times from 1938-79).

so may then buy houses or seek accomodation in what has hitherto been the "White" areas. However, we will still be faced with the vast problem of inadequate housing for the majority of our people. To remedy this problem, several concerns will have to be addressed:

(a) There would be a need to embark on a massive housing scheme. Here we could endeavour to provide houses on a below-market basis merely to cater for the overcrowding which exists at present.

(b) There would be an urgent need to change the building laws and regulations applying to mass housing. This term implies that the housing must be available and easily accessible to the masses.

(c) There will be a need to embark on the provision of a number of sites that will have been provided with a basic minimum service, such as water. Thereafter, the people should be allowed to build their own structures to accomodate them and their families. This would certainly be the first step up the ladder towards acquiring a permanent home or structure. It can be likened to the development of an informal sector in the economic sphere. The provision of additional facilities such as electricity would be for a further phase development.

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that the advent of a post-apartheid government would produce some immediate changes in South Africa. Most of these changes would be of a structural nature, such as the building of houses on a mass scale, or the introduction of technical institutions for training purposes. Whilst the mere changes alone will have a salutary effect on the people of South Africa, there will still be the question of the attitudes described at the beginning of this paper. These will not easily change. A number of people may refuse ever to accept a Black as an equal person. Others may revert to their secret organisations to plot for their continued survival and possible ascent yet again.

Some harsh steps may have to be taken against radicals who continue to fan racial oppression or racial differences, leading to certain people being disadvantaged. We would probably see the introduction of a Racial Affairs Board which could hear complaints of racial malpractice.

For South Africans across the whole spectrum, from the government through business and through people in a social scene, there will be vast changes. The most difficult aspects of change will relate to changes in attitude, bearing in mind that the present situation will undergo radical changes.

Motlana: Hey Kaffir!

Over the long term, the problem of adjustment will be harder for those who presently consider themselves to be superior to others, merely because of the colour of their skin.